

CDFA Protects: “Keep Invasive Species Out, Don’t Pack a Pest” - Video Transcript

Guest (RL): Robert Leavitt, Ph.D., Director, Plant Health and Pest Prevention Services Division, California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA)

RL: “CDFA’s Plant Health Services exist in order to protect California’s agriculture and California’s environment against invasive pests.”

Dr. Robert Leavitt California Department of Food and Agriculture

RL: “It’s not just agriculture it’s also the cities, the parks, the forest, the wild lands. We’re here to protect all of California’s environment both commercial agriculture and the urban environment against these invasive pests. I mean - you don’t want invasive weeds and invasive insects in your front yard - or your back yard - and we don’t want them in the citrus - and we don’t want them in the vegetable fields. So we’re here to protect California - and California’s environment - against these invaders.”

Pest Exclusion

RL: “Our first line of defense here in California against invasive pests is our Border Protection Stations. We have 16 Border Protection Stations protecting California from invasive pests. We don’t want people bringing in fruits and vegetables – unknowingly - that harbor insects, weeds or diseases. So when people come into California, yeah they’re stopped and they’re asked if they have fruits and vegetables from out of State - and we remove those so that we can protect our great agriculture here - and we can protect our great fruit supply and our environment here in California - and our urban environment - against these things because we don’t want them spreading. And that’s our first line of defense. Prevention is always the least expensive and most environmentally compatible way of fighting invasive pests.”

Resources

RL: “Here in California in order to help us defend against invasive species we have some of the world’s most famous scientists and other professionals to protect us against these invasive species and they do their job to identify invasive species, identify insects, diseases and weeds that might be a threat to California’s environment - and then we work very hard in order to help prevent them from getting into the State or remove them once they’re here.”

Public Awareness

RL: “Well my biggest concern about the public not understanding invasive pests is that they don’t know how important it is to keep invasive pests out of California - and what a good job the CDFA’s Plant Health Services does to protect them. For instance, when I go to the grocery

store, I look at this tremendous variety of fruits and vegetables and I am always impressed - or to the farmers' market and see local farmers interacting with people and educating people about where fruit comes from and how it's grown. But a big part of that is the fight against invasive pests that protects our agriculture - that protects our urban agriculture - the trees in your front yard or your back yard - protects our local farmers and our organic farmers so they can produce that great abundance that we find and almost take for granted here in California - and I'm very proud of the job that California's Plant Health Services does to help fight against invasive pests."

Please Don't Pack Pests

RL: "Well basically what you can do to help is when you go out of state - don't bring back fruits and vegetables, don't bring back firewood. Without knowing it, they can harbor invasive pests. Also, don't ask your friends overseas to send packages of fruits and vegetables - because they could also harbor invasive pests. The other thing the public could do to help us really out is if you see something out there that doesn't look right, if you see something that looks like an invasive pest, call your county agricultural commissioner and they'll send out a biologist to investigate - or go to our website - our CDFA website - and there you'll find a section called "Report a Pest" - and fill out the form - and send it in to us and we'll make sure a biologist comes out and investigates and checks out the problem. We are very proud here of our ability to respond very quickly to pests in California and the faster we respond - with the public's help - the more environmentally compatible our response can be."

Pest Hotline
1-800-491-1899

cdfa.ca.gov/invasives/